

Message Text

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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT KS US
SUBJ: VIEWS OF PRESIDENT PARK ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

REF: SEOUL 3365

1. OVER PAST FEW DAYS I HAVE MET PRIVATELY WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER KIM CHONG-PIL AS WELL AS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON. DISCUSSIONS CENTERED ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND PROSPECTS FOR EASING OF CONTROLS, INCLUDING RELEASE OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS. BOTH KIM AND CHONG ARE SUPPORTIVE OF CONCESSIONS IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD AND, FROM MY CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM, AWARE OF AND MUCH CONCERNED BY POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR CONFRONTATION WITH US ON THIS ISSUE, RECOGNIZING PRESSURES QUICKLY BUILDING UP.

2. KIM HAD JUST CONCLUDED THREE HOURS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK, INCLUDING LUNCH, WHEN I MET WITH HIM. MEETING WITH PARK WAS FOLLOW-UP EFFORT TO PERSUADE PARK TO EASE PRESSURES WHICH KIM HAD AGREED TO UNDERTAKE AT OUR PREVIOUS MEETING (REFTEL). WHILE KIM FOUND A SLIGHT EASING IN PARK'S POSITION IN COMPARISON TO HIS PREVIOUS MEETING WITH HIM, PARK'S ESSENTIAL POSITION OF RESISTANCE TO CONCILIATORY MOVES REMAINED UNCHANGED. ACCORDING TO KIM, PARK SAID THAT HE WAS COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THE

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PRESENT SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, THAT IT SERVED KOREA'S ECONOMIC AND DEFENSE INTERESTS VERY WELL, AND THAT HE SAW NO REASON TO CHANGE IT. PARK IS FULLY AWARE OF U.S. VIEWS, BUT PARTICULARLY FACED WITH GROUND FORCE WITHDRAWAL, HE WAS AT THE PRESENT TIME UNPREPARED TO COMPROMISE ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. KIM POINTED OUT THAT PARK'S MOOD COULD, CHANGE QUITE QUICKLY. HOWEVER, AT PRESENT TIME, PARK RESISTS ACTING UNDER WHAT HE PERCEIVES AS U.S. PUBLIC AS WELL AS PRIVATE PRESSURE. KIM TRIED TO CONVINCE PARK THAT PRESSURES COULD INCREASE BUT MADE NO DENT IN PARK'S POSITION, ALTHOUGH HE WAS ENCOURAGED AT LEAST BY THE FACT THAT PARK MUCH EXTENDED THEIR MEETING, ENDING UP BY INVITING HIM TO STAY FOR LUNCH.

4. KIM ALSO SOUGHT TO DISSUADE PARK FROM PURSUING CONFRONTATION WITH JAPAN ON CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE. HE POINTED OUT TO PARK HOW FAVORABLE PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA IS TO KOREA'S INTERESTS AND REAL POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES FACED BY FUKUDA. KIM COMMENTED TO ME THAT IT WAS FOOLISH AND UNREALISTIC FOR KOREANS TO THINK IN TERMS OF UNILATERAL OIL DRILLING SINCE NONE OF THE WESTERN COUNTRIES WITH THE NECESSARY KNOW-HOW WOULD ASSIST KOREAN DRILLING.

5. SPEAKER CHONG GAVE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME APPRAISAL OF PRESIDENT PARK'S ATTITUDE ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION. HE FELT THAT PERHAPS THE ONLY WAY TO MOVE HIM WAS TO MAKE BOTH PARK AND THE KOREAN MILITARY AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN THE ABSENCE OF PROGRESS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA. CHONG INCIDENTALLY TOOK VERY MUCH THE SAME VIEW AS KIM ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT.
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